

Dear History–Social Science Subject Matter Committee of the Instructional Quality Commission,

My name is Ernest Neeley and I've been a teacher for 23 years in California and I am gay. I would like to applaud the California Department of Education for following up on the mandates in The Fair Education Act, Senate Bill 48. I was also a gay student in California. I wish we would have had these mandates in the 70's and 80's when I was educated.

LGBT kids have unique needs and are often at high risk for low self-esteem, high absenteeism to avoid harassment, physical and verbal harassment, drop-out, running away, violence, depression, suicide, and suicide attempts. I can relate to more than one of those criteria growing up and going to California schools in the 1970's and 1980's in Fremont, California. To compound these problems, California schools have often omitted homosexuals from the curriculum and teachers are usually afraid, unsure, or unaware of the need to portray homosexuals in our society accurately in the curriculum. Please keep wording like that in chapter twenty extolling teachers to present role models from the homosexual minority group "on a regular basis".

Unfortunately, today many people want to deny our existence. I still hear people suggest, "there are not homosexuals at our school". Evidence shows that 5-10% of our population will identify themselves as lesbian or gay (e.g., gallop polls, studies of Albert Kinsey). Conservatively speaking, 5% would equate to 1 or 2 LGBT students in every high school class.

I would like to relay some personal stories that I've come across, most in the last thirty days or so. A third grade teacher was telling me about one of her students two years ago who was teased for having two lesbian parents, my lesbian friend's son sat in an after-school program borrowing my classroom and I overheard his friends using "gay" several times as a put-down, an effeminate student in my class was targeted by our class bully and called homo, the counselor at our school relayed a message about two of her high school counselees gay and afraid to live openly in one of our high schools, a district office employee shared with me the president of one of our high school's GSA (gay straight alliance) group had her science report containing gay sub-topics censored by the principal, the same student shared a need to have a high school counselor visit and address family issues with GSA participants, I spoke with a high school junior recently who said he was considering taking his life (I reported this to a social service agency), and I have my own stories of discrimination and harassment for being gay that I won't go into. Also, Ronin Shimizu, a seventh grader from Folsom Cordova School District committed suicide in December 2014. I can't help but wonder how much of the aforementioned situations wouldn't have happened if California schools taught the mandates in Senate Bill 48 thoroughly.

In my own classroom, when I pick up a book about Judy Blume and it mentions her marriages, but the book about Maurice Sendak does not mention his gay partner – that's discrimination to me. I hope the revisions of the new framework will encourage

teachers to include the homosexuals that were sent to concentration camps, the gay civil rights movement in junior high when talking about US Growth and Conflict, and when high school students talk about Oscar Wilde they should know he was gay, went to prison for had labor and his literature was used against him to prove he was gay. I extol the new Comprehensive Sexual Health Instruction laws that will hopefully make sex education more LGBT inclusive. As a teacher I've felt odd and misleading showing films in the past that say things like, "All you boys will someday experience an attraction for the opposite gender," when that isn't always so, perpetuating the abnormal feelings gay kids have and the sense that being gay is different and bad to their peers. Hopefully in the future California schools will provide a way of instruction to educate kids on what exactly homosexuality is, taking the negative stigma off it, and hopefully eradicating those high risks mentioned earlier.

Kudos for you in participating to correct the inequalities in the curriculum, in helping do our duty to protect kids and educate them in an environment where everyone feels safe to be themselves.

Thank you for hearing my concerns,

Sincerely,

Mr. Ernest Neeley

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